**Report**

**4th World Youth Congress**

**Presented by Sally Wissa**

History:

The WYC series started initially in Hawaii, the second took place in Morocco the year after in Brazil before ending with the 4th World Youth Congress that was held in Quebec City, August 10-21 2008 .

Participants:

The conference hosted around 500 participant of the world’s most dynamic young activists in the field of sustainable development coming out of 120 different countries where they were selected on the basis of the projects they have done. There was a strong role at the Congress for cultural performers represented in the remarkable presence of young journalists, film makers and musicians, as well as for those with an interest in sustainable development, but less personal experience in this area.

Congress Theme:

The 4th WYC Congress celebrated youth and the role they are play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals represented in:

1. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieving universal primary education
3. Promoting gender equality and empowering women
4. Reducing child mortality
5. Improving maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development.

Congress main objectives:

* Supply participants with skills and support to enable them, more effectively, to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
* To honor the achievements of the most ambitious, most effective and most successful young practitioners of youth-led development and draw the attention of the world’s development professionals to the need to provide increased support to them to enable more youth to become agents of change.
* step change in the level of support and acknowledgement for the positive role of youth in society worldwide.
* Enable intercultural exchanges between local and international young people;

The Congress schedule had various features:

* local action projects where delegates joined young people in communities within 250km of Quebec City to help them with a Local Action Project;
* a full cultural program with a talent show, parties & various cultural performances;
* Skills Workshops;
* debates and discussions with development professionals
* massive exhibition (showing YLD projects from around the world).
* Massive march through the city on the International Day of Youth to hear speeches & music from celebrities & leading politicians.

Action Project:

During the action segment of Quebec’s World Youth Congress, the young delegates were able to work on 40 different action projects joined forces with young Canadians to help shape international policy by documenting and showing governments what young people are able to do to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and contributing to community development.

Therefore after ten days of the Congress our clan has met its Action Project located aux berges du lac Castor, 180 km far from Quebec City lasting for three days. We were staying in wooden cottages in the forest required to do a lot of manual work at the inn by repairing a wall of cement, painting buildings and cutting trees for the purpose of forest paths cleaning.

The idea behind the action project was to prove that we can go further than just talking but taking action wherever we go, it’s also the evidence that we can ourselves be at the heart of the changes we want to see happening in the world. I think this was my most extraordinary experience that I would have never get the chance to experience other where else. It will be an always kept memory.

Massive Exhibition:

The congress organized a massive exhibition for youth lead development projects from most of the major organizations and individuals working on development projects worldwide. The BA delegate worked on preparing the booth for the VIP visit to the exposition, exhibiting publications and flyers of our most important projects like the Info Mall website, Arab Reform Forum and Arab Youth Forum.

Debates and discussions with development professionals:

The conference was honored by the presence of important symbols and intellectuals worldwide. In the opening ceremony we were honored by the attendance of her Excellency the Right Honorable Michaelle Jean (Governor General and Commander in Chief of Canada) who stressed that "Youth are not the leaders of tomorrow but the leaders of today", Dr. Kumi Naidoo; Founder and Honorary President of CIVICUS, Dr. Kandeh Yumkella; Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, David Woollcombe; president and founder of Peace Child International who emphasized that youth can always take the lead in teaching and building through doing public work and that they have to take action by themselves because no one will start unless they do, Dr. Ismail Serageldin; Director of the library of Alexandria presented an impressive speech stating that knowledge is more than just information. Knowledge is data, information and wisdom with which we have to find ourselves. He ended up his presentation by stressing on the role of youth in societies giving examples of young wise leaders as Newton, Einstein, Heisenburg and Martin Luther King clearing how they could change the world and come out with brilliant theories in a very young age.

Skills Workshops:

During the conference I got the chance to attend several workshops presenting diverse themes. Following are some of the important workshops attended:

* The first workshop was entitled “GKP forum on Social Entrepreneurship talk show”.

At first, they started introducing the GKP (Global knowledge Partnership); a small organization, the pioneer in its field sharing knowledge for a better environment. It has over 350 members.

An esteemed panel of experts and innovators shared their wisdom, experience and creative insights. This talk show unraveled the key to nurturing social entrepreneurs and enterprise: what is needed to be a social entrepreneur, what do social entrepreneur need, where and how they can access any support.

* A further workshop I attended was entitled “The entrepreneurial profile: The development of our skills in action” we started by having a test about self evaluation of our entrepreneurial skills and discussing the high and low grades obtained as well as each sharing his project or field interested in and clearing its weak and strong points. Moreover we discussed the project environment; its motivations (what pushes you to work), interests (what you like), competencies (what you are able to accomplish). A further exercise was dividing us into small groups given a list of values figuring out the common values and discussing how these values are aligned with the projects we run.
* Eight years after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and with only seven years to go before the target year 2015, a lot has been achieved, but much more remains to be done.

Starting with these words the round table started of the “United Nations program on Youth” workshop, each of the delegates shared his/her experience and they explained how they overcame the challenges and the problems they faced when trying to take part in achieving the MDGs.

* One of the interesting workshops was that of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina presented by Heba El Rafey; deputy of the director of the Dialogue Forum Department, the BA acting as a beacon of knowledge aiming to be a centre of excellence for the production and dissemination of knowledge, and believing of its role to be a place of dialogue and understanding between cultures and people, it has taken the leader of rolling this workshop about how new media can be used to aid in the dialogue across cultures that became a critical factor in today’s society of globalization and fear of the unknown other. We started the workshop by defining ourselves and each to mention piece of information about the country of his colleague, we were also divided into separate small groups discussing the diversity of cultures, norms and values and examining the imposed perceptions of others created by traditional media recognizing the severe gap and great diversity of peoples’ lives. As participants were examined the current utilization of media, including satellite channels, web blogs, and sites such as Facebook and Youtube, and how these may influence citizens and decision makers and we were assigned to investigate new ways of how youth can take charge to promote cross-cultural dialogue with the aim of greater positive global interaction.

- “UNDESA/ Division for Sustainable Development” was a workshop where the Major Groups program associate talked about involving youth in decision making processes and how this is essential for the successful implementation of sustainable development policies and programs.

CSD (UN commission on Sustainable Development) seeks to advance the role of youth and actively involve them in protection of the environment.

It has also brought ideas to the table, stimulate debate, network, built partnership and participate in high level discussions.

Recommendations:

Suggestions for the 4th Arab Youth Forum inspired from the World youth Congress:

* Cultural Night:

organizing a cultural night asking every delegate to bring his country’s costume to perform some sort of a folklore show is highly recommended to pull out their talents and high creativity.

* Action Projects:

engaging youth in action projects will keep the conference alive, it will be an unusual experience for many in empowering their perception about the community service. Action projects may last for couple of hours or according to the time schedule of the conference, taking place in hospitals, orphanages…etc.

* Bags content:

the bags are suggested to include t-shirts and block notes for all participants with the forum logo on it.

* Exhibition:

Knowing the other and discovering the everyday reality of youths around the Arab countries is important, therefore holding an exhibition including booths for all Arab delegates exhibiting their most important projects as well as most famous symbols of their countries such as costume, flag and similar items would facilitate defining their countries to the others.

The exhibition might be open to the general public as well as the delegates for the public benefit.